

Nightmares

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Summary: They both suffered, reliving the same memory over and over again, but it was Hiccup's turn to comfort his best friend.

Post-HtTYD2. Ficlet.

Nightmares

***Post HtTYD2, and therefore contains in-depth plot spoilers.**

Nightmares

Hiccup woke with a start. What had begun as a soft whimpering from the opposite end of his room had escalated into deeper, pained warbling. Hiccup sleepily pushed himself to sit upright in his bed, squinting through the darkness. Grimacing at each despairing groan, Hiccup prepared to haul himself out of bed and hopefully soothe his friend back to sleep. He'd gotten one foot on the floor and was working out how best to hobble across the room when Toothless let out an ear-piercing cry, shattering the boy's fatigue. Hiccup threw himself across the room, kneeling down by Toothless' head. The dragon was flailing wildly, thrashing his legs through the air from where he lay on his side. He gave another heart-wrenching cry before flailing his limbs even more violently, almost as if he were desperately grabbing for something out of reach, and Hiccup clamped his arms around the dragon's neck.

"It's okay, Toothless," he spoke into the dragon's neck. The crying only continued, following by bouts of terrified whimpering as he continued to frantically grab at the air. At each cry, Hiccup took to rubbing soothing circles on the dragon's neck. "It's okay, bud," he promised, "it's okay." Slowly the violent screams deflated into consistent, heartbroken moaning as Toothless withdrew into himself, curling into the same cocooned position he assumed to protect Hiccup beneath his wings.

Of course Hiccup knew what the nightmare was about. He'd had the same recurring one himself, watching the tragedy unfold from the sidelines, powerless to stop or change anything. Every time, every single time, he saw something he could have done differently: why didn't he keep Toothless somewhere safe while he confronted Drago? Why didn't he listen to his father for once and not try to reason with an unreasonable monster? He saw each error in unbearable clarity upon waking, but regardless of how much conviction he poured into ideas of alternatives, every terror played out exactly the same way. Hiccup woke up, chest heaving and eyes burning, to the same reality.

As did Toothless. He continued to stroke the dragon's snout, pressing his cheek to the crown of Toothless' head. His chest constricted at each anguished sob, wishing more than anything that it was within his power to ease the guilt that tormented his best friend. While did forgive him - absolutely forgave him, with everything he was - it was simply too soon to shake the memory of his best friend stalking him into a corner, slit pupils trembling, primed to fire and kill. They had some work to do before he could banish that image from his mind.

Toothless' eyelids twitched slightly before they shot open. He jumped to his feet, panting and crooning and looking as lost as Hiccup had ever seen him.

"Hey, hey, it's okay, bud." Moving his hands to hold the dragon's jaw, Hiccup tried to gently steady him. Still horrified, Toothless' eyes darted around the room, his head convulsing away from the boy who he had, only moments earlier, watched die by his hand.

"I'm right here, it's okay," Hiccup continued to soothe. Gradually, the dragon began to calm, and settled down to lie on his stomach, head still held in Hiccup's hands. "It was only a nightmare." The way the dragon stared up at him, robbed of honor, pleading for forgiveness that was already his, broke his heart.

"It wasn't your fault," Hiccup insisted, always taking the opportunity to convince himself as well as Toothless. "That wasn't you. You would never hurt me. You would never hurt him." The words came more easily each time Hiccup repeated them. And he believed them, he truly did, but fear still leaked its way into the foundation of his confidence in Toothless

He loved his father. He had been impossible, stubborn, brave, selfless, harsh, gentle, inspiring, and he had barely even begun to get to know him. The longer Hiccup went without him the more he feared he would forget the man and only be left with a fractured impression of his character and a vivid recollection of how he was killed.

But amidst the web of loose threads left between him and his father, he still could find solid ground. He had a family. He had, after so many years, his mother who loved him dearly. He had Astrid. And he had Toothless. However damaged their bond might have been, it was nothing that they couldn't heal.

The dragon crooned and pressed his snout into his human's arms and Hiccup hugged him right back, pressing his face into the dragon's scales. His shoulders shook, but he pushed away the grief that had

reared up and overwhelmed him seemingly out of nowhere many times before. He had been mourning long enough. It was time to know that he would not forget the man, and move on. Stoick would be proud of him.

"I love you so much, bud."

Toothless gurgled, finally relaxing from the nightmare, and nuzzled the boy. Hiccup only held on tighter.

There they stayed, until the terror faded into a memory.

* * *

><p>I just really needed some vomit-inducing bro time after that mother of a sequel. Wow, guys, wow. Ouch.<p>

Most likely rampant with mechanical/grammatical/logical errors, if you find anything that burns your eyes (aside from the massive volume of sap), feel free to let me know.

* * *

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Inspired by "Night Terrors" fan artwork created by jackthevulture dot tumblr dot com

End
file.